

# REMEMBERING THE KANJI

## VOL. 3

*Writing and Reading Japanese Characters  
for Upper-Level Proficiency*

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*THIRD EDITION*

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# Introduction

THE PRESENT volume, which completes the *Remembering the Kanji* series, is an update of the 1995 and 2008 editions. When the Japanese Ministry of Education and Science issued its revised list of general-use kanji (常用漢字) in fall of 2011, the material in all three volumes had to be reorganized to reflect the changes. As a result, VOL. 3 now contains 800 characters. Together with the 2,200 covered in VOLS. 1 and 2, this makes for a total of 3,000 kanji. The number is not based on any established measure of “upper-level proficiency.” I had found it mentioned in one of the dictionaries I consulted as the estimated number of characters a university graduate in Japan might be able to read,<sup>1</sup> and that seemed enough. In the course of preparing the book, 3,000 proved a workable convenience.

The choice of characters was complicated. What are most useful for one specialization would not hold for another. With the kind assistance of Tanya Sienko, who computerized a database for the project, I decided to aim for the most commonly used, and with that in mind I turned first to a list of 3,505 characters published in 1963 by the National Japanese Language Research Institute. Since 1956 the Institute had been issuing periodic reports of research on kanji frequency in various fields of study. Based on some ninety academic and popular journals, a team of scholars turned up 3,328 characters, to which the Institute added another 177.<sup>2</sup> Although the list was not based on the Ministry of Education’s list of general-use kanji (常用漢字), it covered all the kanji found in the 1977 list but did not include all the characters from the Ministry’s 1990 and 2011 revised lists. Preference was given to kanji identified as higher-frequency.

The resulting list was later checked against tables based on frequency of appearance in the *Asahi shimbun* over a span of fourteen years,<sup>3</sup> excluding a small number of proper names not in the 2011 general-use list. In addition, computerization brought its own problems and a fair share of debate—all of which needed due consideration. A brief history of the early years has been covered in earlier editions of this volume but may be passed over here.

<sup>1</sup> 鎌田正・米山寅太郎著『大漢語林』(Tokyo: Taishūkan, 1992).

<sup>2</sup> 「現代雑誌九十種の用語用字」『国立国語研究所報告』22 (1963).

<sup>3</sup> See, for example, 天野成昭、近藤公久『日本語の語彙特性—朝日新聞の語彙・文字頻度調査』(Tokyo: Sanseidō, 2000), the first in an ongoing series of volumes known as the NTT database.

Even with the list of 3,000 kanji in hand, the pronunciation of the kanji, *on-yomi* and *kun-yomi*, presented a special problem. In the case of personal names, the range of readings is far too extensive to merit committing to memory. What is more, Japanese authors frequently draw on uncommon *kun-yomi* or even create their own. Once again, the absence of established criteria for common usage made a certain degree of arbitrariness unavoidable. The *on-yomi* presented an additional difficulty. Given the use of “signal primitives” introduced in VOL. 2, there were a handful of cases in which learning the *on-yomi* was automatic, even if rare. In the end, I decided to allow most of these to stand.

There are six indexes at the end of the volume. Index I shows hand-drawn examples of all the new kanji introduced in this book. Index II is a cumulative listing of all the primitive elements and signal elements introduced in VOLS. 1, 2, and 3. Index III lists all the “signal primitives” from VOLS. 2 and 3. Index IV arranges all the kanji from all 3 volumes in order of strokes. Indexes V and VI contain cumulative lists of all the Chinese (*on*) and Japanese (*kun*) readings for the kanji of all three volumes. Finally, Index VII is a comprehensive list of all the key words and primitive meanings in VOLS. 1 and 3.

Parts One and Two follow, respectively, the methods of VOLS. 1 and 2 of *Remembering the Kanji*. The layout of the frames has changed slightly to include cross-referencing. Frames in Part One look like this:

①	<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between; align-items: center;"> <div style="text-align: left;"> <p>2813</p> <p>② R-2605</p> <p>Spool... head. [14] ⑥</p> <p>⑦ The key word here is meant to specify the anatomical <b>neck</b>, to distinguish it from the broader uses of the character 首 (FRAME 74).</p> </div> <div style="text-align: center;"> <p>neck and throat ③</p> </div> <div style="text-align: right;"> <p>④ 頸</p> </div> </div>
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⑧

- ① Frame number. The enumeration is continued from VOL. 1.
- ② Frame number of reading. The corresponding frame appears in Part Two of the present volume. The enumeration continues from VOL. 2.
- ③ Key word.
- ④ Kanji.
- ⑤ Primitive elements.
- ⑥ Number of strokes.
- ⑦ Explanatory note. *Italics* are used to refer to primitive element, **bold type** to the key word.
- ⑧ Cross-reference to frame numbers in VOLS. 1 and 3.

The frames of Part Two are patterned on the following sample:

①	②	③	④	⑤
辟	へキ	壁 壁 癖	ヒ	避
		R-860	R-861	R-862
		⑥		R-863

  

⑦ 譬	ヒ ⑧				⑨ 2759
R-2701	⑪ 譬喻	⑫ ヒユ	⑬ metaphor		
⑩	⑭ 譬える	⑮ たとえる	⑯ compare; liken to		

- ① Signal primitive for the following frames.
- ② Primary *on-yomi* of the signal primitive.
- ③ Kanji from VOL. 2 with the signal primitive and its primary *on-yomi*.
- ④ Secondary *on-yomi* of the signal primitive.
- ⑤ Kanji from VOL. 2 with the signal primitive and its secondary *on-yomi*.
- ⑥ Cross-reference to frame number in VOL. 2.
- ⑦ Kanji.
- ⑧ *On-yomi* of the frame kanji.
- ⑨ Cross-reference to frame in Part One.
- ⑩ Frame number for Part Two (reading). These numbers are continued from VOL. 1.
- ⑪ Sample compound and writing for *on-yomi*.
- ⑫ Readings of sample compound and *on-yomi*.
- ⑬ English translation of sample compound and Japanese meaning.
- ⑭ Kanji inflected for *kun-yomi*.
- ⑮ Full *kun-yomi*.
- ⑯ English translation of *kun-yomi* example.

In conclusion, I should like to express my thanks to Sano Takayo for her meticulous checking of the completed typescript, and to Pat Crosby of the University of Hawai'i Press for taking over the publication of this and other volumes in the series.

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Nagoya

## CHAPTER 1

# New Primitives and Kanji Primitives

### NEW PRIMITIVES

WE BEGIN our journey to 3,000 kanji with the addition of a few new primitive elements to those already included in VOL. 1. They have been included only if they appear frequently enough in the kanji in general to be useful, or if at least three instances appear in this volume. Each new element is followed by the new characters in which it appears.

After this, all the primitives in this volume should already be familiar to you. If you get stuck, consult the comprehensive list in Index II at the end of this volume.

2201 R-2846	this here	此
<i>Footprint . . . spoon.</i> [6]		
- 卜 止 止 止 此		
❖ Used as a primitive, this character will take on the meaning of a <i>laser pointer</i> , the kind you might use to highlight something on a screen during a demonstration.		
2202 R-2847	brushwood	柴
<i>Laser pointer . . . tree.</i> [10]		
2203 R-2849	whit	些
<i>Laser pointer . . . two.</i> [8]		

2204	fort	砦
R-2848		
	<i>Laser pointer . . . stone.</i> [11]	
2205	beard	髭
R-3189		
	<i>Mane . . . shape . . . laser pointer.</i> [16]	
❖	sheik	离
	<p><i>Top hat . . . villain . . . belt . . . elbow.</i> This element is already familiar from the character 離 (FRAME 1605). The element for <i>elbow</i> here actually requires three strokes instead of the usual two, the combination of elements 𠂇 being a radical classically defined as having five strokes. Thus, although the general-use character 離 draws the last three strokes with two strokes, in less commonly used characters like the three that follow, dictionaries follow the older stroke count—even though most people today prefer the simpler writing, as shall we. [10]</p> <p>𠂇 𠂇 𠂇 𠂇 𠂇 𠂇 𠂇</p> <p>离 离 离</p>	
2206	fowl	禽
R-2907		
	<i>Umbrella . . . sheik.</i> [12]	
2207	apple	檣
R-2908		
	<i>Tree . . . fowl.</i> [16]	
❖	shoeshine	薙
	<p><i>Rice . . . sunglasses.</i> This combination of elements has already been learned from the character 隣 (FRAME 1408). The assignation of the primitive meaning is almost entirely arbitrary. [12]</p> <p>米 米 米 米 米 米 薙</p>	



## CHAPTER 2

# Major Primitive Elements

THE KANJI treated in this chapter comprise the bulk of PART ONE of this book, 615 characters in all. Each character is entered under its principal primitive element, and the elements themselves are arranged in their dictionary order.

### 人 PERSON

2244 R-3109 <i>Person . . . committee.</i> [10]	Yamato	倭
2245 R-2425 <i>Person . . . scissors.</i> [8]	chivalry	侠
2246 R-2638 <i>Person . . . scroll.</i> [11]	fed up	倦
2247 R-2442 <i>Person . . . ego.</i> [9]	abrupt	俄
2248 R-2860 <i>Person . . . rice field.</i> [7]	work a field	佃
2249 R-2865 <i>Person . . . child.</i> [5]	animal offspring	仔

## CHAPTER 4

# Western Measurements

THE HANDFUL of characters presented in this chapter are meant to introduce you to the basic principles used in writing Western units of measurement. Contemporary Japanese has by and large discarded this way of writing, but it is not uncommon to meet these characters in historical texts. As frightening as they might appear at first, there is a very clear logic to their composition.

2953	kilometer	料
R-3200		
<i>Rice . . . one thousand.</i> [9]		
The character 米 is used for <b>meter</b> (from the sound). Thus, a <b>kilometer</b> is made by adding the element for thousand.		
2954	centimeter	厘
R-3199		
<i>Rice . . . one rin.</i> [15]		
The reason that the <i>rin</i> (厘, FRAME 190) or 1/1000th of a yen is added to the meter to give us <b>centimeter</b> is that 厘 originally meant 1/100th, and 毛 1/1000th, as we see in the following frame.		
2955	millimeter	耗
R-3198		
<i>Rice . . . fur.</i> [10]		
Incidentally, you should note that the same conventions are used to create liters, centiliters, and milliliters, based on another kanji chosen for its sound: 立, 蚩, and 耗.		
2956	ton	噸
R-2717		
<i>Mouth . . . immediate.</i> [16]		

## CHAPTER 5

# Phonetic Characters

WHILE THE *kana* syllabaries have taken over most of the chores of incorporating loan words in their original sounds, a few exceptions have survived. The following group of characters are used mainly today for their sound value, rather than for their meaning. In each case, the sound is provided by a signal primitive, as will be indicated in Part Two of this volume. To make things simpler, signal primitives (or there composite elements) have been underlined throughout this chapter.

2961 R-2650	brahman	梵
This is the sound character for the Sanskrit word <b>brahman</b> , and is also used to indicate the Sanskrit language as such. Its elements are: <i>grove</i> . . . <i>mediocre</i> . [11]		
2962 R-3016	bodhisattva	薩
<i>Flowers</i> . . . <i>pinnacle</i> . . . <i>products</i> . [16] Although this character can be used as an abbreviation of <b>bodhisattva</b> , the full writing combines it with that in the following frame. Both of them are transliterations of Sanskrit terms.		
2963 R-2950	bo tree	菩
<i>Flowers</i> . . . <i>muzzle</i> . [11]		
2964 R-2529	babble	唾
<i>Mouth</i> . . . <i>Asia</i> . [10] The sense of the key word is that of a baby oohing and aahing.		

## CHAPTER 6

# Old and Alternate Forms

EARLIER ON, in FRAME 2440 of chapter 2, we introduced an old form of the character for technique (芸 → 藝). In this chapter we pick up 32 more old and alternate forms. In some cases, the older form has never been “updated.” In others, both forms are still in use. Examples of other cases where older forms and newer abbreviations occur are given in their respective frames.

2969 Japanese cypress [old]

R-3210

檜

*Tree . . . meeting . . . pent in . . . little . . . sun.* [11]

The right side of this character looks rather more formidable than its simplified form (桧, FRAME 1446) is. The tricky part lies in the elements that have been described as “*pent-in . . . little*.” (The latter element you will remember from the element for *outhouse* 𩇑 or *candle* 肖.) The combination, when it appears in other characters, is generally abbreviated to the shape of the element for sun. In any case, drawing the shape will show it to be quite natural. Here are some examples of the old form and their standard, simpler forms:

OLD FORM

MODERN ABBREVIATION

會  
繪

会 (814)  
絵 (1446)

2970 tinkling bell

R-3154

鐺

*Thread . . . words . . . thread . . . mouth.* [22]

The primitive at the top of this character is abbreviated in more common words as 𠂔, a primitive element that was learned in VOL. 1 (page 379). Note the following examples:

## CHAPTER 7

# Old Pure Groups

THE FIRST GROUP of readings center on what were called in *Remembering the Kanji* 2 “Pure Groups.” Each character that belongs to a pure group contains a **signal primitive** which prescribes a given *on-yomi* for that character and all others in the group with it.

*The number to the far right of the top line set in bold type* indicates the frame number in which the writing of the kanji was introduced. In almost all cases this refers to a frame in Part One of the present volume. *The number under the character in each frame* is preceded by an “R-” to indicate that it refers to a reading frame. These numbers begin where VOL. 2 left off.

Unlike VOL. 2, the frames also include not only *on-yomi* but *kun-yomi* as well. In some cases, the “assigned” readings are almost never used, or used only for names. Because the number of special readings for names is virtually limitless, we have included only those that are practically never used except for names. For further information about the layout of the frames, see page 3.

We begin this chapter with groups whose signal primitives were already introduced in VOL. 2. The signal primitive, its pronunciation, and characters belonging to the same appear in a separate frame at the head of each section.

*The number under the characters in the group frames* refers to the frame in VOL. 2. which introduced the reading (hence the “R-” preceding it.) Where a number is missing, the single primitive in question was learned as a primitive.

白	ハク	泊	迫	拍	舶	伯
R-89		R-90	R-91	R-92	R-93	R-94

𤝵	ハク	2432
R-2410	虎狛神社 狛犬	コハクジンジャ こまいぬ Kohaku Shrine (Tokyo) lion-dogs guarding shrines
	The character is actually the name of one of the lands of ancient Korea. The <i>on-yomi</i> is rarely used, even in names.	

箔	ハク	2678
R-2411	金箔 キンパク gold leaf	
粕	ハク	2690
R-2412	糟粕 ソウハク lees; dregs 粕 かす lees	

青	セイ	精	清	晴	静	請	情
R-78		R-79	R-80	R-81	R-82	R-83	R-84

靖	セイ	2666
R-2413	靖国 セイコク a country ruled in peace	
錆	セイ	2793
R-2414	防錆 ボウセイ protection against rust 錆 さび rust	

包	ハウ	砲	泡	抱	胞	飽
R-95		R-96	R-97	R-98	R-99	R-100

庖	ハウ	2341
R-2415	庖丁 ホウチョウ kitchen knife	

兎	ケン	俟	験	険	検	剣
		R-132	R-133	R-134	R-135	R-136

鹼	ケン	2880
R-2416	石鹼 セツケン soap	

付	フ	府	符	附	腐
R-69		R-70	R-71	R-73	R-73

腑	フ	2529
R-2417	腑に落ちる フにおちる to catch on; “click”	

官	カン	管	棺	館
R-128		R-129	R-130	R-131

菅	カン	2490
R-2418	菅家 カンケ Sugawara family Note how the family is referred to by using the <i>on-yomi</i> of the first character of their full name. 菅 すげ sedge 菅原 すがわら Sugawara (family ame)	

義	ギ	議	儀	犧
R-74		R-75	R-76	R-77

蟻	ギ	2726
R-2419	蟻酸 ギサン formic acid 蟻 あり ant	

襄	ジョウ	嬢	讓	壤	釀
		R-101	R-102	R-103	R-104

穰	ジョウ	2655
R-2420	穰歳 ジョウサイ bumper crop 穰る みのる bear fruit; fructify 穰か ゆたか fruitful	